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DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



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6d.



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DRAMA

VOL. V

OCTOBER MCMXXVI

NUMBER 1.

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

THE BEST PLAYS OF SEPTEMBER

By Hubert Griffith

ONE play produced last month seemed to me incomparably better than any or all the others that occurred in that time. It dwarfed them. It gave an intenser pleasure; it gave more to think about; it lived longer and more charmingly in the memory. But even when this is said, there is the best left unsaid. It threw a light (that has never yet been thrown, on the stage) on a whole set of characters seedy with over-usage—the Bohemians. It gave them a justification and a meaning.

The play is, of course, "The Constant Nymph." It justifies the bohemianism of the Sanger family by going to its essential: old Sanger, dying up in his room, is felt quite clearly by us to be a big musician; young Dodd, who takes his place, is felt to be his successor and inheritor, someone also who has something to give to the world.

Bohemianism, in any sense in which it is important or interesting, is not an affair of messy coffee cups and cigarette ash, irregular hours and noise. It is open to any producer to put upon the stage a family equally untidy with the Sanger family, equally unpunctual, equally disputatious, ill-mannered, outspoken, and (if you like) promiscuous. Miss Kennedy's secret has been to show us that the Sanger off-spring was not like this merely because it thought it amusing to be like this. It was like it as an inevitable consequence of being children of a household where artistic work—the father's work—was treated as all-important.

This "artistic work" is not a picnic. It involves sacrifices. One thinks of Wag-

ner's own "forty years in the wilderness," as he called it—forty years in which he lived in poverty, squalor, in debt, unrecognized—years in which the one driving impulse within him was to get that work done, even at the risk of the world never hearing of it—in the blind and fervent hope of the world some day hearing of it. If Wagner had had children by his first early marriage they might have been very like the Sanger children—victims. Miss Kennedy makes us believe that the sacrifice may have been worth while.

There are many moments in "The Constant Nymph" that I remember with deep and enduring pleasure in their beauty, or with the delight of seeing an effect that I had never hoped to see brought off on the stage. There is the moment at the end of the duet in the first act when Dodd and Tessa sit for a moment looking at one another—a silence that is given a wonderful poignancy after the hubbub that has preceded it. There is the family conversation when the outcast Antonia sits down at table and finds her love affair with the impressario dismissed with a few sneers—after which the family proceeds with its operetta.

There is Mr. Coward's acting as Lewis Dodd, and Miss Best's as Tessa, and Miss Spencer's as the other sister, and a combined intelligence of effort both on the whole cast and of the producer such as is rarely seen in London.

The best of the other plays seemed to me to be "The Fall Guy," with its very subtle and amusing performance from the American comedian, Mr. Ernest Truex.

CONCERNING PRODUCTION

I. PRESENTATION

By A. E. Filmer

THE theatre of to-day, though perhaps few are conscious of the fact, is a fusion of two different conceptions of two widely different outlooks on dramatic art.

These may be labelled the Presentational and the Representational concepts, and before attempting to deal with the technique and practice of the producer's craft, these two concepts must be examined, as the consideration of them will serve to provide a working theory and an æsthetic, however simple, of the theatre.

Now in the theatres of the three great dramatic literatures of the world—the Greek, the Elizabethan, and the Spanish of the seventeenth century, to which should be added, with reservations, the theatre of Molière and the French Classicists—the stage had one feature in common: it was architectural, it was a fixture. Neither the Greek, the Elizabethan nor the Spaniard could, as we can to-day, alter the shape of the stage at will. True, there were, in all those periods of acknowledged mastership, various parts of the stage which were used for various purposes: the Greek orchestra, the Elizabethan "Heaven," the alcove or inner stage of the Spanish theatre, but these features were themselves architectural, and the important thing to realize is that the stage-shape was fixed and unalterable. This meant that the dramatic form, the construction and writing of the play were governed technically by this rigid physical condition of the place of performance. In consequence, the actual way of showing the play to the public was equally governed by the unchanging stage as well as, of course, by other physical conditions of the theatre, and since the very form of the stage rendered naturalistic means, that is to say realism, or in one

word Representation, impossible, I have called this earlier, this classical conception of the theatre, the Presentational Concept.

The playwrights of the great presentational periods could not rely upon naturalistic or realistic aids for the dramatic effects they wished to convey: they had to rely mainly upon their own power of attack, and their power of evocation by words, description, action. The stage was fixed, the background was permanent. The stage became, as it were, a mental zone, a medium for the projection of the poet's conception, a medium in reality almost as independent of time and space as the imagination itself. Compared with the physical conditions of the theatre in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the presentational stage might almost be called metaphysical. The absence of scenery, the permanent position of the entrances, the absence of the act-drop, these made representation, the attempt to copy externals, an impossibility: in the great historic periods of dramatic literature the play was presented to the audience and not, as we like to think to-day, represented in its presence.

As with dramaturgy, so with acting: it was inevitably presentational in method. Speech was of primary importance—"athletic elocution" in Mr. Shaw's words, and direct attack—forceful speaking directly to the audience; studied gesture and attitude, these were made necessary by the lack of scenery and lighting effects. These must have been of greater importance (reason and textual inference both support it) than the psychologized, pseudo-naturalistic acting of to-day.

As to stage direction (or producing): as nothing like a modern prompt-copy has survived, and as the stage-directions

CONCERNING PRODUCTION

of old editions are remarkably scanty, it is necessary to study theatrical history and the unedited texts of old plays. The former, thanks to modern research, is comparatively easy; the latter, thanks to academic scholarship, is not a little difficult. Editors have interfered with old texts in ways that render them, theatrically, both confusing and misleading. To modernize punctuation, spelling, capitalization is bad enough, for does not such editing deprive a text of bouquet, as it were, of flavour and atmosphere? Further, undivided texts have been cut up into acts and scenes, stage-directions altered, changed, omitted, and, worst of all, scenes have been localized. This is undoubtedly the most mischievous of all editorial misdeeds, for, if one thing about the older dramatists is certain, it is that no thought of localization entered into their conceptions. Shakespeare did not imagine a public place in Verona or the like; he conceived a scene to be presented on a platform stage. How, since the Representational Concept had not arrived and the theatre of his age had scant means of representation, of localization, could he have conceived otherwise?

Stage-direction and mounting were conventional, suggestive, symbolic, formalized. Journeys were accomplished "in sight": that is, it sufficed for the player to walk from one side of the stage to the other, or to encircle the stage, to suggest his passage from one country to another. A bed was "thrust forth" (from the traverse-curtains which masked the inner stage) when the exigencies of the scene required a bed. It was probably these curtains which were drawn when Prospero "discovered" Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess, and similar curtains or sliding-flats were opened when in Calderón's *El Alcalde de Zalamea*, the Captain is discovered garotted in a chair.

We know that, apart from furniture,

certain pieces of moveable scenery (there is no other word) were sparingly used: trees, a wall-piece or battlement, and so on, but the use of them must have been decorative and suggestive rather than realistic in intention. Realistic, representational, it could not have been. Verisimilitude differs widely from realism, and verisimilitude was sought by all means available, especially, for instance, by the use of evocative sound. Falling rain, wind, the singing of birds, the sound of moving horses, all were stimulated in the Elizabethan theatre, and Lope de Vega, anticipating Sir Henry Irving by some centuries, suggested thunder by rolling cannon-balls about the stage precincts. And we may be sure that visual verisimilitude, too, was not other than well accomplished. Fine plays are not written when there is no theatre fit to give them life, to give them adequate, more than adequate, presentation. There is no doubt that the Greek, the Elizabethan and the Spanish theatres achieved performances of dignity, verisimilitude and beauty. Who can conceive a play by Sophocles or Euripides in its wonderful amphitheatre as being undignified or lacking beauty? And as to the others, there is not only the evidence of contemporary playgoers (and that in plenty), but there is the strong internal evidence of the plays and the suggestive, though scanty, stage-directions to prove that the presentational method implies no crudity in stage-direction; rather does it suggest productional practices of great charm and subtlety, full of opportunity for style and, moreover, making really immense demands upon the ingenuity, stage-dexterity and inventiveness of the stage-director or producer.

The Presentational Concept survived long after "scenes and machines," originally introduced for the spectacular stage of the masque and the opera, were firmly established on the dramatic stage. Spectacle became more and more elabor-

CONCERNING PRODUCTION

ate, achieving a splendour which to-day is scarcely attempted in the most ambitious productions, but presentation was the ruling concept and mode throughout the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth century. The stage-directions in the early editions of our Restoration dramatists indicate production practices which, in the writer's opinion, prove not clumsiness or crudity, but a highly developed, a charming presentationalism. Thus, in Vanbrugh's "The Confederacy," Brass and Flippanta converse before the closed flats, painted with a view of a street. At the close of their duologue Flippanta says, "See, there's my lady, go in and deliver your letter to her." The flats were here withdrawn, discovering Clarissa, who immediately addresses Flippanta and Brass. But the modern editor, obsessed with the idea of representation, writes, "Scene III—A Parlour. Enter Clarissa, followed by Flippanta and Brass." Instances could, of course, be multiplied—both of illuminating stage-directions and of miscomprehension on the part of editors, but enough has been said to prove that modernized texts of old plays are misleading, and while waiting in the hope of faithful reprints, the student who has not opportunity to study at the Museum should set a friend to ink over all the stage-directions, and especially all the localizations, in his copies of old dramatists.

The fact—upheld by modern scholarship and by deduction from the texts of old plays themselves—the fact that the stage and methods of staging were presentational in the great periods of dramatic literature, has been emphasized not only for better understanding and that we may recapture some of the charm of past theatric art, but also because with what has been said of the importance of unedited or non-modernized texts, we arrive at a second principle: that to approach a period play from the

point of view of representation and to ignore those features which constitute the very architectonics of dramaturgy, is unsound æsthetics.

Since producing cannot be taught like arithmetic or astronomy, since there is no exact science about it, the student must train by indirect means. Theatrical history and archæology are now studied scientifically, and form a delightful branch of learning. The beginner should read "The History of Theatrical Art," by the late Dr. Karl Mantzius, especially the first four volumes; he should read and re-read Mr. William Poel's "Shakespeare in the Theatre"; he should study carefully "The Elizabethan Playhouse and other Studies" (two vols.) by Mr. W. J. Lawrence, and no one interested in the theatre can afford to neglect Mr. Bernard Shaw's "Dramatic Opinions and Essays."

And those who wish to be thorough can read Haig's "The Attic Theatre," the works of Mr. E. K. Chambers ("The Mediæval Stage" and "The Elizabethan Stage"), Professor Rennert's "The Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega," and the same author's "Life of Lope de Vega." Some of the above works contain bibliographies which will make the student wish life were longer! Much can be gleaned too, from theatrical biographies—Lowe's "Betterton," for instance, and Cibber's "Apology," and the diarists like Pepys and Evelyn, but all are of secondary importance to the reading of old plays in unadulterated texts.

NOTE.—Based on a series of lectures delivered by the author to an advanced amateur society, and intended for beginners and amateurs of the craft, the above article will be continued in our next number.

Mr. Lee Nichols, who has recently been appointed a lecturer on Drama on the University Extension Board, University of London, is giving a course of lectures on Modern Drama in England at the Chiswick Public Library on Fridays at 8 o'clock. Mr. Lee Nichols is able to arrange for other courses. Particulars may be obtained from the Drama League.



A. B. WALKLEY. DRAMATIC CRITIC. BORN 17 DECEMBER, 1855. DIED 7 OCTOBER, 1926. REPRODUCED, BY PERMISSION, FROM "THE PORTRAIT DRAWINGS OF WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN," PUBLISHED BY MESSRS. CHAPMAN AND HALL.



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THE VIENNESE THEATRE

IT is a strange coincidence that Russian artists should have commenced and Russian artists should have finished the last theatre season in Vienna.

Coming from a country of political experiments, Tairow, with his Moscow artists, tried to create a new dramatic form for the reproduction of those lights and shadows which reign in Russia to-day.

In his first production, a *pantomime* called "Pierette's Veil," he endeavoured to show Vienna the essence of his art, explaining things by purely physical movements rather than by any intellectual talk, and hoping that this would satisfy the artistic public of Vienna.

He utterly failed in this endeavour; coming from modern Russia, with its mechanical, hasty and systematized form of life, the acting of his company produced a strange discord in the quieter Central European atmosphere. Action was so quick on the stage that the Viennese public could not follow it.

The strongest sway over the Vienna Theatre to-day is held by *Max Reinhardt*, the greatest of German producers. He is lucky to possess a company of actors to whom there is no equal.

The ensemble, or "Team of Stars," as it is characteristically called, is of such brilliancy in the artistic hemisphere of the Continent that even the most important and famous actors are willing to appear in the smallest and most insignificant parts, so long as the honour of being a member of this constellation of stars remains theirs. This explains why Reinhardt's productions remain so consistently good, even in the minutest detail, and also partly explains why he occupies himself so much with mediocre drama. In plays like those acted this season (*Révoir-Besnard's* "My Friend Teddy," *Goldini's* "The Servant of Two Masters," and *Sacha Guitry's* "My Father was Right") there is plenty of original creative work

for the actors and for the producer, without being hampered by superiority in the dramas themselves. When witnessing these plays, indeed, the splendid acting made us forget the weakness of the works themselves.

Of course, some really good plays are performed by Reinhardt's marvellous cast, and then every performance is a real feast of delight. During the last season we had the pleasure of witnessing such performances as Galsworthy's "Loyalties," Werfel's "Juarez and Maximilian," Bourdet's "The Captive," and among the classical dramas, Schiller's "Kabale and Liebe," "King Lear," and a "Midsummer Night's Dream."

It was extremely interesting to watch the effect of "Hamlet in Modern Dress" on Vienna. Mr. Ayliff, who had produced "Hamlet" for Sir Barry Jackson in London, met with much criticism, and we have the feeling that, but for Moissi, the greatest and most popular actor of the German stage, the production would not have lived two days. The experiment, despite Moissi, proved a failure, and is unlikely ever to be repeated.

The Volks Theatre, where "Hamlet" was performed, also produced "Lady Windermere's Fan" and Bernard Shaw's "Man and Superman." In the latter play, the prologue which takes place in Hell, was seen for the first time in this country; the play was a tremendous success. Generally speaking, Shaw's plays, particularly "Saint Joan," form the most essential part of the stock repertory of the Vienna Theatre. At any time during the last season there were at least two or three of Shaw's plays to be seen in the Vienna Theatre. Their ironical and merciless criticism, their gracious and opalescent form, and last but not least the tragedy which lies behind these plays, creates an atmosphere which is of the very essence of the soul of

THE VIENNESE THEATRE

Vienna to-day, for tragedy with a smile on its face, is another way of re-naming Vienna.

There are two theatres in Vienna whose main asset is their spacious and somewhat morbid interior decorations, i.e., the Theatre-Saloon of the former Imperial residence (Redoutensaal), and a small Chamber Theatre, built by Maria Theresia in the gorgeous Austrian Barocco style. Their fantastic architecture forbids any naturalistic acting, and a modern, or even futurist stage setting seems more fitting in this environment. Thus in a remarkable way, we find that an old and died-out artistic style is godfather to the birth of the newest theatre forms.

Of particular interest this year was the visit of the Moscow Hebrew troupe "Habimah." The splendid acting of the Jewish actors bridged the difficulty created by the fact that they were playing in a language which the largest part of the audience did not understand; they were enthusiastically received.

The visit of the Russian "Blue Bird" Company, which finished off the theatre season, found a much less enthusiastic reception. The acting of this company seems to be a cross between the conceptions of Tairow and Stanislowsky—the *mis-en-scene* was very modern and the technique of acting very old.

A final review of the whole season shows a clear line of demarkation between different plays according to the nationality of their origin. As usual, the daring comedy of well-known complications of married and un-married life, comes from France; social plays, full of problems solved and unsolved, from England; the classical and art-revolutionary drama from Germany. Only one Austrian, Franz Werfel, scored a success with his play, "Juarez and Maximilian." Amongst English playwrights whose plays were produced during the last season, first, of course,

comes Shakespeare, then Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy, Wilde and Lonsdale.

This report would not be complete without mentioning the most interesting creation of the last year, the "Wireless Stage." While the modern theatre movement tries to do away as much as possible with the part played by language, the "Wireless Stage" is solely built upon speech. Great difficulties are, of course, inherent in the necessity of showing action and dramatic situations by sound alone. Nevertheless the wireless plays were done with great skill and success, and neither sense nor general impression of the performance suffered through the lack of a visible stage.

The coming season will undoubtedly be ruled by the terrible economical depression, under which only sound and very attractive works will be able to maintain their runs; and so there do happen to be advantages about such a sad period as the impoverished Austrian nation is at present passing through.

K.K.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—I am producing shortly, with Mr. Jonathan Cape, a *Playgoers' Handbook to the English Renaissance Drama*. It contains an essay on the "Elizabethan" play as an art-form, a brief descriptive critique of English drama before 1640, and a chapter on its production at the present time, the whole being considered in terms not of the printed book but of the acted play. I am anxious to add to it an appendix, giving some account of the revival of this drama on the modern stage. A good deal of valuable work has been done in this connexion by amateurs, and I should therefore be most grateful to the secretaries of dramatic societies for a list of any pre-Restoration plays performed by them, with dates and any other information they consider relevant. It would be a convenience if this could reach me by the end of October.

Yours truly,

AGNES MURE MACKENZIE
304 Elm Tree Road Mansions, N.W.8

THE FOOTLIGHT EVIL

By J. Hanson-Lowe

THE recent production of "The Three Sisters," and now the arrival of "The Cherry Orchard" at Barnes, has brought the name of Theodor Kommissarjevsky, the producer, into every theatregoer's mouth, for it is certainly owing to his thorough understanding of Tchekov's works that we also are able to appreciate this author. No other producer could have made such a success of them, so different is their idiom from that of the average English play.

We bow to Kommissarjevsky as interpreter and régisseur, but he is equally great in lighting effects, as the production of the "Three Sisters" clearly showed.

Nothing is more disastrous than bad lighting effects in a good play, and in those bad lighting effects ninety-nine times out of a hundred it is the footlights that are at fault. It must be understood that the realistic only, as opposed to the theatre "theatrical," is being thought of when it is declared that the footlights, except in certain cases, must go.

Let us take Act 2 of the "Three Sisters." In the stage directions the author says there is to be no light until Natalya Ivanovna enters with a candle. Now what does the average producer do? He has darkness at first, and then, when Natalya comes in, the footlights throw up a dark purple light in order to show up the actress's face, followed by a bright orange light when the light is lit, thus destroying all true shadow value.

Kommissarjevsky does not disgust our feelings with such a pandering to the actress and her matinee worshippers. He gives us darkness and then pure candle light with all its fascinating shadows and silhouettes. When the lamp is lit we have unadulterated lamp light. The consequence is that we feel more than ever that we are helping and taking

an active part in the play; that the back of the theatre is the fourth wall of the stage—for it is not everyone who accepts William Archer's view that the special privilege of the audience is to be, as it were, in the position of the gods on Olympus, seeing all the interplay of human character with the consciousness of being apart from human beings and on a higher level.

If we look at Acts 1 and 4 of the same play for a moment, it will be remembered that we are supposed to be looking at the garden-room of a house from the garden. Here the use of footlights is legitimate, as the strongest light will naturally come from the garden and light up the room. The effect is therefore natural and pleasing, and the play gains thereby.

If any reader should doubt the argument for a moment and point out that too much stress is being placed upon lighting effects instead of upon facial expression—which the absence of footlights would occasionally obscure—let him ask himself if he has ever seen a more dramatic close to an act than that of the third act of the "Three Sisters"? Yet there was not a single person upon the stage when the play was performed at Barnes. The lamp—or was it candle?—in the next room threw the shadows of Olga and Irina upon the ceiling, great flickering shadows, and one could hear their voices full of longing—for Moscow—for the unattainable. It was the subtle harmony of sound and shadow which accomplished this impressive finale.

This single play has been taken as it embodies all the essential points of good lighting within the compass of a single play, but examples could be found by the dozen.

Relentless war must be waged against the despotic rule of the footlights until they are made to serve in their rightful place.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

THE appearance of DRAMA in a new and, we trust, a more agreeable form, coincides with a further development of our work in many directions. Among other things, the continuous growth of the library has necessitated the acquisition of a new office on the second floor of Adelphi Terrace, and this, besides allowing more space for the library, will incidentally provide more and better accommodation for the staff which, equally with the volume of the League's work, has to grow. Luckily our membership also continues on the upward grade. Last year at about this time we were hoping for a membership of fifteen hundred. Now the two thousand mark is well in sight, and we shall indeed be disappointed if by the end of the year it has not been achieved. We ask all our members to co-operate in making the League known to any of their friends who might be interested in its work.

On another page appears a brief account of the preliminary work which has been undertaken by the various area committees of the forthcoming National Festival of Community Drama. This is a matter which will be dealt with more fully in our November issue. The relation of the National Festival to "the London Club Competition" was discussed at a special meeting on September 8. It was unanimously decided that the Club Competition should not be allowed to lapse, and that its special character as an elementary competition for the less advanced drama groups in London should be maintained. Only such groups as are definitely attached to some social or educational institution will be allowed to enter for the next competition, which will be held in the summer of 1927. The 1926 competition, it will be remembered, had to be scratched owing to the General Strike in June.

Members have already been informed of the arrangements for the fifth annual Conference of the League, to be held, this year, in London. On previous occasions the provincial cities where conferences have been held have been generous in the civic welcome that they have extended to our members. It is pleasant to note that London is not to fall behind the precedent established elsewhere. The reception to be given by the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House on the opening day of the Conference will be notable not only as a fine and hospitable welcome to members of the League and delegates of our affiliated societies, but as an act of recognition of the work of the League and, still more, of the ideals for which it stands.

On Wednesday, December 8, at 2.30 p.m., at the Century Theatre, London, Miss Lena Ashwell and Mr. John Drinkwater will adjudicate the Village Plays Matinee, at which plays will be presented by village groups from Ditchling, Fittleworth, Henfield and Peppard Common. Tickets may now be had from the Drama League, price 3s. 6d. and 2s. each, including tea. All seats reserved.

THE MONTH'S BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

Yesterday. By Margaret Macnamara. Benn. 3s. 6d.
Junior Historical Plays. By W. Greenfield. Blackie. 2s. 6d.
A Banned Play and a Preface on the Censorship. By Marie C. Stopes. Bale. 5s.
Nobodaddy. By Archibald Macleish. Dunster House, Camb (Mass.) 25s.
Ulysses in Ithaca. By Frank J. Mather, Jr. Holt. 6s.
Judas. By the Author of *Nisi Dominus*. St. Dominic's Press. 10s. 6d.
One-Act Plays of To-Day. Selected by J. W. Marriott. Harrap. 3s. 6d.
The Nursery Maid of Heaven, and Other Plays. By Thomas Wood Stevens. Appleton. 6s.
Oliver and Nina Balalta. By T. Walker Harding. Heffer. 3s. 6d.
The Practical Theatre. By Frank Shay. Appleton. 5s.

I ALWAYS feel a little suspicious about historical plays. So often they are historical only because the author feels that a skinny imagination looks better in doublet and hose than in waistcoat and trousers. Miss Macnamara's play is different. It will not please those whose idea of a costume play is no more than an excuse for some handsome and popular actor to go peacocking up and down the stage in fine clothes. For once in a way the characters are vigorously alive instead of just being picturesque. The atmosphere of the tenth century is reproduced robustly and without squeamishness. It is a play full of bustle and colour, flavoured with a rich tang of mediæval brutality. But before production it would have to be heavily cut. The action litters too long upon the way.

Mr. Greenfield's plays are very brief, intended for boys from nine to thirteen to act in a classroom with only a single rehearsal. Stripped of all essentials, they put into practice their author's dictum that "to attempt to rival the young imagination is either vain or foolishly injurious." Above all, they are packed with action, without which acting quickly becomes tedious and difficult to small boys. This is one of the very few "understanding" books of plays for children.

It will be a pity if anybody misses Miss Marie Stopes' play under the impression that it is propaganda. It is nothing of the kind. It is simply an essentially dramatic situation handled with a brilliant sense of the theatre, and a cast of only three. The weakness of the play is a touch of crudity in the drawing of the two men, but if ever a play deserved that misused word, "gripping," it is this one. The long preface on the censorship is refreshingly reasonable, stressing the point that it is not the Censor who should be blamed, but the current code of so-called morality which it is his task to interpret.

The title of "Nobodaddy" prepares one for a "sugar and spice and all things nice" sort of play, but it turns out to be a blank verse play about Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel. The verse is lithe and supple, the atmosphere is finely created, and there are some magnificently dramatic moments. It is a very lovely piece of work.

Mr. Marriott's third collection of one-act plays falls into three parts. There are the comparatively well-known plays, such as "The Pot of Broth" and "The Dumb and the Blind." Then there are Mr. Marriott's "discoveries," which include John Brandane's "Rory Aforesaid," and Herbert Farjeon's "Friends." Thirdly, there is, for some reason or other, a batch of fusty old "amateur favourites," like "Master Wayfarer," "Mimi," "The Bishop's Candlesticks" and "A King's Hard Bargain." They make rather a pathetic show in this company. And it is sad to see Mr. Brighouse represented by such sugar-and-water stuff as "How the Weather is Made."

"Ulysses in Ithaca" and Colonel Harding's two plays are both pleasant enough to read, but neither show the smallest sense of the theatre. "Judas" is a rather "precious" little play written in the style of the mystery plays. It is beautifully done, but copying superannuated literary conventions seems a singularly sterile and mannered sort of aestheticism. Next on the list is Mr. Steven's book, which is merely one more collection of those correct, colourless and wholly unnecessary one-act plays which are being produced so fast in America, and are presumably the off-spring of the "Drama Departments" in the universities. Lastly, there is Mr. Shay's concise and valuable guide to the organization, management and finance of "Little Theatres" and amateur companies.

First Studies in Dramatic Art. By Enid Rose. Clive. 5s. 6d.

IT will doubtless interest some people to learn from Miss Rose that "the elbow and lower arm illustrate the feelings centred in the heart," or that the fingers should be contracted to express determination, and that to express disdain the eyebrows should be "expansive." But these facts have no more practical value to the producer or actor or anyone else than statistics about the number of steps taken by famous actors during a performance of "Hamlet." The danger of a book like this is that it may serve to increase the number of incompetents who crowd into the ranks of the profession fondly believing that they have made up for lack of creative impulse by learning a series of gymnastical exercises. However, perhaps Miss Rose intended her book primarily for "the student of the drama." At least, she hopes that it will prove useful in connexion with the University of London's diploma in dramatic art. But it is difficult to see why anybody studying the drama from a purely theoretical point of view should go to the trouble of learning "how to learn to act," even though such advice is decked out in the jargon of aesthetics and embellished with quotations from Swedenborg, Garth Wilkinson and Darwin. The only useful part of the book is the admirable section on "The Development of the Theatre and the Drama." It should be reprinted separately, for it deserves a better fate than the rest of the book.

THE FESTIVAL THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE

THE old Theatre Royal, Barnwell, rebuilt in 1816, was for long the only theatre in Cambridge, and is believed to be the only Regency playhouse surviving intact. Macready, Kemble, Charles Kean, Miss Foote, Vandenhoff, and Sheridan Knowles all acted in it, and Dickens gave readings there. For the last forty years it has been decorated with texts and used as a mission hall. Now it is to be known as the "Festival Theatre."

The stage of the theatre has been entirely rebuilt according to the most modern methods, based on a study of the more successful experiments in Europe and America. The result will be the most advanced theatre in the British Isles.

There will be a forestage, forty feet wide, sweeping into the auditorium and ending in a flight of fan-shaped steps to which diagonal gangways will lead, following on the lines of the forestage. There will be no proscenium, but there are to be three stages, one behind the other, each with its own curtain. The two downstage sections will have a permanent architectural setting. The upstage section will be slightly raised, and constructed so as to roll forward, giving access to a deep understage store room from which a flight of steps can be used when needed in a play. On the middle-stage will be a turntable on which architectural structures can be revolved, so as to reveal varying aspects of their forms and surfaces. Scenery will be mainly three-dimensional, simple and architectural in character, using form and colour, light and shade for variation of scene rather than frequent changes of realistic setting.

The lighting equipment will be of the most modern and flexible kind, so that light as a medium of expression may be developed to the fullest possible extent. A cylindrical cyclorama is being constructed, and this will be lit with Schwabe lighting.

The auditorium will be lit with coloured floods, the colours varying so that the atmosphere of each play may extend to the theatre as a whole, and the appearance of the interior may not become monotonous to the regular patrons.

The auditorium is being reseated, re-decorated and generally modernized, but

the traditional characteristics of a Regency playhouse are being retained, in so far as they do not interfere with the comfort of the audience.

Policy. There will be three seasons annually of eight weeks each, corresponding with the university terms. Each play to run for one week. The programme will be as universal as possible, including plays of all ages and countries. Each season will comprise one Classical play, one Historical, one Static, one Expressionist (or otherwise experimental), a Triple Bill and a Modern Comedy. During one week of each season there will be an exchange of companies, which may be the first practical step towards a wider co-operation between all the Repertory companies in the country.

Experiments in modern dramatic theory will be undertaken occasionally. Dancing and the art of movement generally will be developed as a means of dramatic expression. To this end Miss Ninette de Valois has been appointed Choreographic Director.

The list of plays from which the programmes of the first three seasons will be chosen has little in common with the usual repertory theatre programme. A large number of the plays are of a kind depending greatly on the imaginative staging and the creation of atmosphere. Hitherto most repertory theatres have avoided plays of this type owing to lack of equipment for producing them adequately. Also the Festival Theatre proposes to undertake a considerable number of plays which have hitherto not been produced because they have casts of such length that the average repertory company dare not attempt them, and for this purpose the nucleus professional company of about fifteen persons will be supplemented locally.

It is hoped that the theatre will become a centre of training and experiment in all branches of dramatic art. The success of the enterprise depends on the whole-hearted co-operation of all those in town and university who are interested in the drama.

The Directors of the Theatre are Mr. Terence Gray and Mr. C. Harold Ridge, and the Producer, Mr. Herbert Prentice, late of the Sheffield Repertory Company.

A SIMPLE STAGE FOR A LITTLE THEATRE

By H. Weston Wells

THE excellent advice, which is so generally given, that amateurs should play to curtains, leaves for individual solution the problem of how these curtains shall be hung. Wire tends to sag; and amateurs are often called upon to play in halls where there are no facilities for hanging curtains, and no room for stage sets. For these and for other reasons, the frames which I am about to describe are likely to be useful to amateurs and dramatic groups which visit now one hall and now another.

They are inexpensive and easy to construct. They can be speedily erected and disassembled, and moved without great risk of breakage. They can be used for almost any style of setting, and adapted to almost any sized platform.

The basic idea is a set of two-fold screen frames—four of these folding frames making a complete set, though useful work can be done with two. Each frame consists of two uprights, hinged together; and on each of these uprights are hinged a top and bottom cross-piece. Into each of these cross-pieces a hole is drilled at about an inch from the end; and the outer uprights, which enclose the folding frame, have at the bottom a short headless nail, and at the top a long headless nail which fits into these holes. It is as well to half-lap the pierced ends of the cross-pieces so that the outer uprights may be gripped the more securely. It should also be noted that, unless very strong hinges are used for joining the cross-pieces to the central uprights, the cross-pieces should be fixed at a little less than a right angle from the central upright by means of a metal bar. In disassembling, this metal bar can be screwed to side of upright.

A scrutiny of Fig. 1 should make the structure of the screen-frames clear.

A convenient size for the screens is 8 ft. high and 3 ft. wide each fold. The uprights can be of timber $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. square, and the cross-pieces $1\frac{1}{2}$ by $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

The screens, when set up on the stage in the position desired, should be screwed to the floor through the bottom cross-pieces.

The frames lend themselves to the use of arches, and with curtains or specially designed canvases a variety of very effective settings can be obtained.

One particular case is worth many pages of generalization, so here follows a setting for "Twelfth Night."

Fig. 2 (a) gives a ground plan of the screens, which are lettered A, B, C, D, E, and F, G, H, I, J, the thinner lines A, C, B, D, etc., being rods resting on top of the screens. Y, Z is the back wall, which may, if necessary, be hung with curtains. P, Q is the front of the stage. K is an upright of the same height as the screens, say 8 ft.; and with arms hinged to the top of it, say 6 ft. or 7 ft. in length. If need be two desk hinges can be fastened to the bottom of the upright, whereby it can be screwed to the floor; but this is not normally necessary. The hinged arms rest along the top of the screens. Fig. 2 (b) shows the screens without curtains. Figs. 2 (c), (d), (e) and (f), show the scenes of the play in the order of their presentation; but before the play commences the stage is set for the first three of these, one in front of the other. Scenes in which only two or three characters appear are best played before the drop curtain; and so it is possible to present the whole play continuously with, say, two intervals.

The throne in the Duke's Palace (Fig. 2 (c)) is made up of four right-angle triangular boxes, which fit into the screens when set at right angles. The sticks, which make the back and arms, fit into one of the boxes as shown in the plan. They can be disassembled and packed up flat for cartage. These boxes are very useful in other stage settings. I have used them, for instance, fitted into the angles of the screens to make the base of a quite effective fountain. In order to facilitate changing of scenery, it is as well to have the curtains threaded on canes so that they can be quickly slipped off or on the screen.

A consideration of these designs for "Twelfth Night" will show how easily complete changes in the appearance of the

A SIMPLE STAGE FOR A LITTLE THEATRE

stage can be effected. To change from (c) to (d) remove the throne and the upright K with its hinged arms, and the Duke's Palace has turned into a room in Olivia's house. To change from (d) to (e), clear away all the curtains of the room scene, and the garden is revealed. And to create the impression of the prison scene, reinstate the upright K with plain hangings, the window being effected by means of a wooden cross fitted in where two curtains meet.

Fig. 3 suggests various additions which with ingenuity can be contrived into these frames. On the left is a practicable window. In the centre are folding doors. To the right is the suggestion for a mantelshelf, M, with slots S₁ and S₂ in the uprights, into which the shelf slides. But I have found the plain screen-frames adequate for any productions I have been re-

sponsible for, and have obtained the effects of doors and windows by means of curtains. This, however, is a matter of individual choice. Personally, I prefer to suggest an impression rather than to strive laboriously after realism.

More than once it has been remarked to me that these screens could not be satisfactorily used on a stage with a proscenium that was more than 8 ft. high. This is not the case. I have used these screens on platforms that had no proscenium, and on stages which were duly encased, and I have found that the double framing of the picture which the play portrays was a feature which passed practically unnoticed.

These screens are free for anyone to make. I once patented an invention, and gained a lot of experience and lost a lot of money. I am now following a more excellent way.

THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL

The preparations are well advanced in the six areas into which the country has been divided and in which, it will be remembered, preliminary Festivals are to be held.

Beginning in the north and working downwards:

Scotland.—The report from Scotland is very encouraging. The Scottish Community Drama Festival Committee was formed at a meeting in Glasgow on June 4, and Mrs. Crichton was appointed secretary. The Area Festival will be held in the Lyric Theatre, Glasgow, on December 9, and sub-area Festivals are being arranged at Perth and Dundee. Perth has already engaged a theatre for three nights, and expects to put up nine teams at least. Clubs of every standing are sending teams—rich and poor, university and factory. Private clubs are also entering into the movement in the true festival spirit. The Press has been a splendid support, and the Duke of Montrose has accepted the Presidency of the Association.

North-Eastern Area.—Four meetings of the Committee have been held at York, which is the centre for this area. The Chairman of the Committee is Mr. J. R. Gregson, the Secretary Miss A. M. Marsland, and the Treasurer Mr. T. R. Dawes. At the date of the report, eleven societies had entered. The Area Final is to be held in Leeds on Saturday, December 18. Two performances will be given—a matinee, which will give the players a chance to get accustomed to the stage, and an evening performance, which the judges will attend. There has apparently been some discussion in reference to professional as against amateur producers, it being felt that the older and wealthier societies would have some advantages in their choice of producer over the more recently formed societies.

North-Western Area.—The chairman of the North-Western Area is Mr. G. O. Sharman (Liverpool).

Mr. John Hirst is the Hon. Secretary, and Mr. C. Eastwood is the Hon. Publicity Secretary. The Area Festival will be held in Manchester on Saturday, December 11, in the Milton Hall. By the date of the report (October 5), eighteen entries had been received. These include entries from many of the most prominent societies in the area. A panel of eight judges has been appointed, with Miss D. Crosse as Hon. Secretary.

Midland Area.—This area is being organized by the Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Federation. Preliminary judging will take place throughout the area from October 30 to November 20, and by the kind permission of Messrs. Cadbury Bros., the three selected teams will be judged at Bournville on November 27. "There is no doubt," says the report sent in to us by the Secretary, Mr. J. Wale Smith, "that the Festival is stimulating interest throughout the area, but at the time of writing it is not possible to give details of the number of entrants nor the localities concerned." Local Festivals are being arranged so that overhead expenses connected with the adjudication may be kept as low as possible.

Southern Area.—The headquarters of this area are in London, and Mr. Cyril Wood has been appointed Hon. Secretary of the Committee with Mr. C. A. Merton as Treasurer. Forty entries have been received, approximately half being from the Metropolitan area, and half from Southern counties, so far as Bournemouth to the south and Welwyn to the north. The Area Festival will be held at the Theatre of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art on Friday, December 17.

South-Western Area.—The South-Western centre is at Citizen House, Bath, the Chairman and Hon. Secretary of the Committee being Mr. Charles McEvoy. Considerable interest is reported in this area, though details are not yet to hand.



TWO VIEWS OF THE OLD BARNWELL
THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE, BEFORE RECON-
STRUCTION.

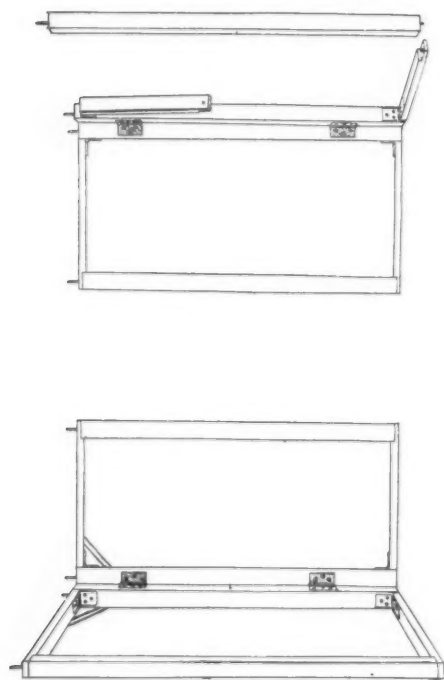


FIG. 1.

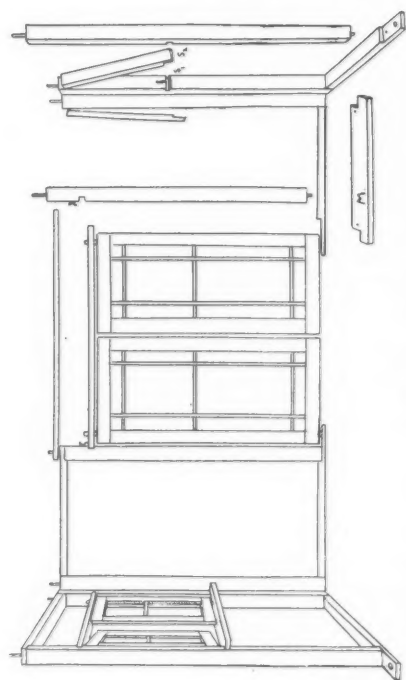


FIG. 3.

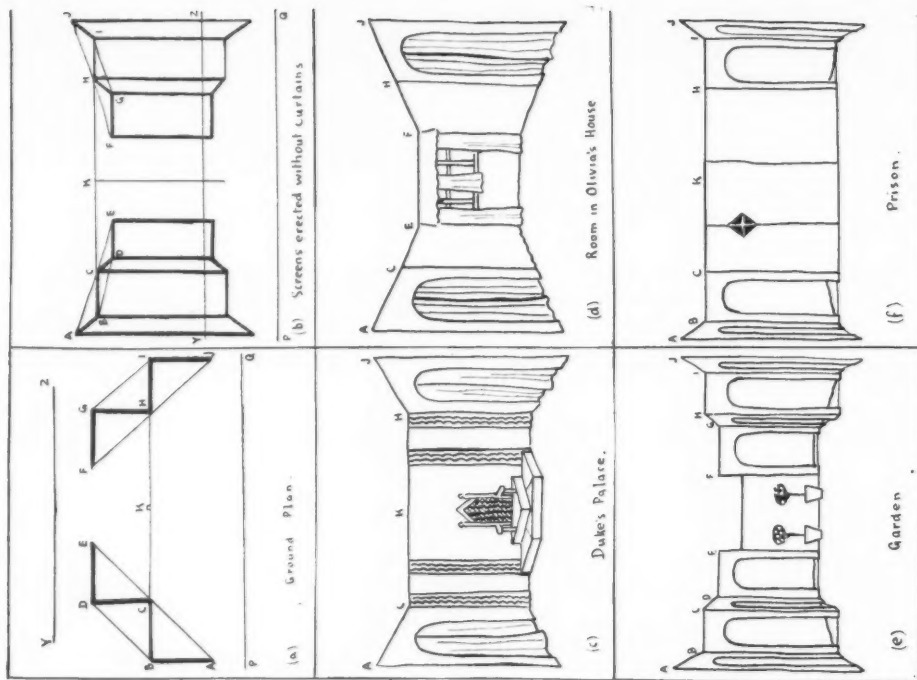


FIG. 2.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

ENGLISH PLAYERS IN A FRENCH CHATEAU.

St. Pancras People's Players in the Little Plays of St. Francis.

A wide crescent of three steep terraces, each terrace built up in front with pine logs placed perpendicularly, and the whole backed with pine woods. Edging each terrace fairy-like lights, while overhead the brightness of moonlight and starlight set in the midnight blue sky of a warm August night. Such was the setting for the Little Plays of St. Francis enacted by the St. Pancras People's Players at the International Peace Conference held at the Chateau de Bierville, near Paris, this August.

Below were an audience of well over a thousand people of all nationalities, very few of whom were English.

The delight of playing on such a large and beautiful stage to so big an audience can, perhaps, be imagined, after our small stage in the St. Pancras People's Theatre, with its auditorium seating only 325, and the Little Plays lent themselves to this naturalistic setting and the necessary wide movement in a most unexpectedly easy fashion.

The plays chosen were "The Revellers," "Fellow Prisoners," "The Builders," "Sister Clare," and "Brother Wolf," with the "Francis and Juniper" duet for finale. The lower terrace was used for interiors, the pine log backing making an excellent setting for a hut, and even for a prison. The middle and upper terraces were the exteriors, opening at the back into the pinewoods. The greatest surprise of all was the success of the "Sister Clare" play, which we had rather feared would be too quiet for outdoor presentation. Most picturesque and dramatic were the entries of Sister Clare and St. Francis from the dense pinewoods at the back of the higher terrace. And what could have been better for the roistering of the "Revellers" than those wide terraces, while for the "Brother Wolf," the scene was almost perfect in its naturalness.

Almost as dramatic and certainly more amusing was the picture "behind the scenes." Our dressing rooms were the pinewoods, with *one* very minute tent for emergencies. Our players were twelve in number, and with so many parts to be filled there was naturally a great deal of doubling up and constant changes, so that the pinewoods were very much alive, but no entracte was longer than ten minutes and some barely five.

The performance took place on a Sunday evening, so that actors who were not on holiday were able to leave London late Friday evening, and get back Tuesday morning. It was a somewhat fatiguing experience, but one that not one of us would have missed. The Council for International Service of the Society of Friends was responsible for the invitation being given, and all expenses were borne by them, even to the extent of a week's hospitality for any who could stay on, when we were able to see something of the German and French work. The company was chosen by the recommendation of Mr. Laurence Housman, author of the plays.

THE SUMMER SCHOOL OF THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY.

(August 21 to September 6.)

A Summer School at Bath! Vapours and the Strenuous Life! Citizen House—that ancient warren of panelled rooms, filled by night with ghosts (we were told) and by day with very modern and lively students of Village Drama. The fantastic lights of the Roof Theatre in a jewelled glow outside one's bedroom window—six simultaneous rehearsals going on in as many parts of this accommodating house—the long, low vista of the Little Theatre—the vivid and Irvingnesque personality of our Producer—such will be some of the pictures which our students will carry away.

But life in that spacious old Georgian town was not always strenuous. There were other actors, many and varied, to watch at their work—real village players, to begin with, native to the soil. And very well they played up too! "Moggeridge's Cow" may be easy stuff—but what is to be said of a really vivid presentation by English villagers of Lady Gregory's "Spreading the News."

On a more ambitious scale were the Shepton Mallet Players with their delightful Elizabethan band, who entertained us with "Twelfth Night" in the same pleasant garden setting which served as background to "The Rivals," given by the Mid-Somerset Players in genuine costumes of Old Bath; while most varied and lively of all were the Citizen Players in their own picturesque Roof Theatre, with song, dance and mime, and the Miniature Dramas of Maurice Baring. The same Players appeared as old-time denizens of Citizen House in a most effective mime-play. There were other privileges for the students—a special reading by Mr. Laurence Housman of his own charming "Prunella," and the kindly and encouraging presence of Mr. Gordon Bottomley, who takes the keenest interest in the development of village drama.

The background of all this dramatic energy was the series of Lectures and Demonstrations on Dancing, Play Producing, Elocution and Historical Costume, given respectively by Miss Stowell, Miss Gwen Lally, Mrs. Gibson and Miss Mary Kelly (the secretary and founder of the V.D.S.)—each an expert in her own particular branch. Some energetic students took practically every lecture throughout the day, besides rehearsing in Miss Lally's very successful production of scenes from "Much Ado" and in some one of the six group plays in which the amateur producers found their opportunity. You might be an airy "Sea-nymph" in the morning, a frowning "Don John" or ponderous "Dogberry" in the evening, and end up your shining hours as a Greek Herdsman, or possibly a Lady Teazle! Exactly how we managed to do it all in a fortnight was a mystery even to our hosts at Citizen House.

This Summer School—with students coming from all parts of England—was the first in the annals of the Village Drama Society, and proved such a success that a greatly increased attendance may be expected at the next. Some of these will look forward with quickened interest to attending

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the British Drama League's proposed school in the spring.

But the Summer School is just an efflorescence, as it were, of the Village Drama Society. Back of it lies a very patient and self-sacrificing work, carried on for the benefit of the village players of England, of whom there are now 178 affiliated branches. Modestly housed in a ramshackle building in the Peckham Road, it carries on from thence a large correspondence with country players of every kind. Indeed, the two societies—the British Drama League and the Village Drama Society, should between them cover the whole of England—so that in the future no amateur group of players need be without a discerning friend to advise, a good play to produce, or an experienced producer to bring it into workable shape.

MARY PAKINGTON.

EXETER DRAMA LEAGUE.

On June 12 the Exeter Drama League gave "The Inheritors," by Susan Glaspell, at the Theatre Royal, Exeter, in connexion with the local Education week. This was an ambitious but successful venture, as we had not before filled so large an auditorium, and the play is by no means an easy one. Though universal in appeal it is definitely un-English in atmosphere and the characters present problems in psychology that do not often fall to the lot of amateurs. However, the producer triumphed over a host of difficulties, the acting of individuals was enthusiastically received, and the financial profit was considerable.

During the coming season we hope to give five or six productions; ranging from "Everyman" to modern comedy, and to include plays by Shaw and Pirandello, as well as a Shakespearian production at the Theatre Royal in aid of the re-building fund of the Stratford Theatre.

DONCASTER.

Readers of DRAMA may be interested in an unusual development in a remote part of the Dramatic world. Doncaster is notoriously a "dud" town in professional circles; and it was completely devoid of "legitimate" amateur organizations until two years ago, when Martin Browne, known as Producer of the Angmering Shakespeare Festivals, went there as Warden of a small Educational Settlement. He and his wife (formerly Henzie Raeburn on the stage) led and trained a company which staged such ambitious works as "Candida," "Masses and Man," "Hippolytus" and the Coventry Nativity Play. Doncaster welcomed them, and they undertook extensive tours among the mining villages, some of which never had a play performed in them before. "Masses and Man" played for fourteen performances. The Coventry Nativity Play was taken to Wakefield Prison. Though the present industrial troubles have brought the Settlement to an end and so deprived the players of their leader, they continue their activities and, as the "Phoenix Players," are entering for the National Festival of Community Drama.

THE CAMBERWELL PLAYERS.

Overtime work in shop and office accounted for the manifest under-rehearsal of Dekker's "The Shoemaker's Holiday," given by the Camberwell Players in the garden of the United Girls' Schools Settlement, in July. Still, several parts were tackled with zest and humour, and all with enjoyment; the scenery was admirably contrived; the costumes were very pleasing.

"The Antiquities of Selborne," a pageant play was presented on July 21, in the grounds of Gilbert White's house, in drizzling rain that presently became a downpour, but even before the umbrellas went up it was impossible for those who stood at the back to hear more than a few words here and there, or to see players except as they came down the terrace to the scene of action. This was very sad, for the dresses were charming, and by reading the book one could gather that the old-world, sententious tone of Gilbert White had been caught by Miss Mary Kelly with sensitive faithfulness and delicate humour.

THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL THEATRE SOCIETY.

Mr. Tyrone Guthrie has been appointed Producer to the Scottish National Players in succession to Mr. Frank D. Clewlow, who has gone South to produce grand opera with the Carl Rosa Company.

Mr. Guthrie first played with the Oxford University Dramatic Society, and on leaving the University was engaged by J. B. Fagan, as stage manager at the newly-opened Oxford Playhouse. With the Oxford Players he gained a useful experience of stage production and appeared in a variety of parts in many kinds of plays—ranging from Euripides to A. A. Milne.

The first production of the S.N.P. for the season will be a quadruple bill of interesting one-act Scots plays, which are to be staged at the Lyric Theatre on 21, 22 and 23 October.

NORWICH PAGEANT.

At Norwich, from July 21 to 24, Mr. Nugent Monck successfully produced the Norwich Pageant. Mr. Monck, who has many brilliant successes to his credit in his association with the Maddermarket Theatre, was responsible for a well-written "book" of ten episodes recording the salient features in the historical life of Norwich and her citizens throughout the ages.

The cast of over a thousand performers included many members of the Norwich Players' Company, and an orchestra and chorus of a hundred performers gave pointed illustration to the progress of music from as far back as the fifth century. A realistically mediaeval setting had been devised at the pageant ground by Mr. Owen P. Smyth, and took the form of a faithful representation of the Norwich castle gateway and turrets.

Throughout the Pageant the huge cast moved with a precision and understanding which bore eloquent testimony to Mr. Monck's painstaking rehearsals, and the acting touched a high standard.

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especially in the tensely played, tragic episode of the Black Death.

An idea of the interest taken in the Norwich Pageant will be realized when it is stated that the gross takings represented over £2,000.

NOTTINGHAM PLAYGOERS CLUB.

Certain passages in the annual report of the above which has just been issued, are of more than local interest.

"All Playgoers" it relates "owe a wonderful increase in the opportunities for studying modern drama and its literature to the enterprise and interest of the City Librarian and his committee in creating the fast growing and very valuable section in the City Library and this year has seen many interesting additions to the catalogue.

"The Meadows Hall has been equipped with a model stage, scenery, battens and floats. Though not in the centre of the city, it is accessible and should fulfil a want of long duration, leading to an increase in the number of play-producing societies, for most of which the heavy cost of stage erection, high rents and poor acoustics of other halls have proved too great a handicap in the past.

"The contemplated conversion of the closed City Church of St. Thomas into a public church hall leads the committee to hope that it may be possible to allow and provide for amateur dramatic performances therein: and steps are being taken to ascertain the views of the various other dramatic societies in the city and to make a combined approach to the necessary authorities. The need for a central hall has long been clamant, and as so many charities are benefited by the results of amateur performances, we are hopeful that the suggestion may be considered favourably."

The Club Lecturers for the last season have been Mr. Basil Dean, on "Things as They Are"; Mr. Bache Matthews, on "The Theatre To-Day"; and Mr. W. A. Briscoe, City Librarian, on "Play-reading." These were, taken as a whole, perhaps the most popular series ever given at the Club.

NEVIL TRUMAN.

NEWTON ABBOT.

The Newton Abbot Repertory Company has now completed its third session.

Noteworthy results of the last session's efforts have been the acquisition of its own orchestra and the production in the Little Theatre of a number of original one-act plays by members.

The chief public productions were: "She Stoops to Conquer," which was considerably enhanced by the incidental eighteenth century music provided by the Company's orchestra and "The Dover Road." On its annual "Night Off" on "Shrove Monday" the Company indulged in a rollicking variety entertainment of an original nature entitled "The Repco Review of Revues." Public production outside Newton Abbot have been "The Bishop's Candlestick," by Norman McKinnel, "Arms and the Man" (Act I) at Dawlish and "The Bishop's Candlestick" and "Man Proposes" by L. du Garde Peach, at Exeter.

EAST LONDON COLLEGE.

It has been decided to arrange for the season 1926-27 a series of performances of dramatic bur-

lesques. These will include "The Rehearsals" (1671), by the Duke of Buckingham, "The Tragedy of Tragedies" (Tom Thumb, 1730), by Henry Fielding, "Chrononhotonthologos" (1734), by Henry Carey, "Bombastes Furioso" (1810), by W. B. Rhodes and "Orpheno in the Haymarket" (1865), by J. R. Planché. If possible, Sheridan's "The Critic" (1779), will be added to the series.

In making this announcement concerning the arrangements for next term, the organizers of the College Theatre desire to issue a special appeal to members. It will be understood that the success of these performances must depend largely upon the number of those who join the Theatre membership, and it is hoped that the members who have witnessed the series of eighteenth century comedies presented during 1925-26 will renew their membership for 1926-27 and will, if possible, aid in increasing the present roll. The response which has been given to these performances in the Press and elsewhere seems to indicate their value and we would ask all the members who have enjoyed the performances of eighteenth century comedies to help us in providing still better productions in the future. While subscriptions will not be due until September, it would aid the organizers if those who wish to join for the season 1926-27 would communicate as soon as possible with Mrs. Allardyce Nicoll, at East London College, or at 89 Lexham Gardens (Tel. Western 4709).

MANCHESTER.

The Amateur Players Society has fulfilled, several times, what should be the main purpose of the amateur movement and given first performances of plays which otherwise might have had to wait unduly long before production. For their final performances of the season they presented three new plays by Mr. James Lansdale Hodson, whose work is well known to Manchester. The plays were produced by Mr. Edward Mawdesley, and having in the cast such well known names as Mrs. Eastwood, Mr. Mawdesley and Mr. Charles Nesbitt, and interesting evening was assured.

Of the three plays "Harvest" was much the finest. Its tense extremely dramatic atmosphere was never broken by a false note, and, despite the subject, sordidness and squalor were skilfully avoided. A play which should be seen again. "The Mixture as Before" was a light comedy, somewhat slowly played; a fault from which many northern clubs suffer when dealing with comedy. Nevertheless it was a thoroughly amusing affair with a delightful ending. The last play "Making His Name" was presumably a sketch intended for the variety stage, and consequently presented technical difficulties which might well floor any amateur. The music-hall manner is born, not made, and however successful the sketch might be on a Stoll tour, it was a trifle bewildering after two plays of the detailed, sensitive "Repertory" type.

The Amateur Players are to be congratulated on letting us have some more of Mr. Hodson's work and on seeing to it that the work was presented in an efficient manner. It is to be hoped that they will continue their present policy and produce new plays whenever possible.

F. SLADEN-SMITH.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

OXTED AND LIMPSFIELD PLAYERS

"Prunella" (by Laurence Housman and Granville Barker) was presented by the above Players on June 1, 2, 3, and 4 in their Barn Theatre. The work of the Oxted and Limpsfield Players is far above the average, and the plays chosen are always interesting. In "Prunella" this gifted company touched the high-water mark of success. They obtained the maximum of effect with the minimum of apparent effort—the band of players giving the fullest possible response.

Among a large cast the two principal characters of "Prunella" and "Pierrot" naturally took first place. Miss E. Seyd played the difficult part of Prunella with sympathy and pathos—the change from the light-hearted child of the first act to the grief-dazed being of the last being most artistically rendered. The "Pierrot" of Mr. F. Seyd was an excellent piece of work, graceful and well spoken.

The Statue of Love was the combined work of Mrs. Olssen, who had contrived a most life-like statue, and Mr. H. Keen, who remained in the pose throughout the play and spoke his lines admirably. The crowd of mummies were excellently produced, being full of life and colour, but their lines were apt to be lost through not speaking up sufficiently.

A very special word of praise should be allotted to the beautiful décor by Mr. S. Parvin. He gave us not a stage representation of an old house and garden, but something that seemed to be a real old-world timbered house, and was one of the most realistically artistic pieces of stage "setting" imaginable.

Mrs. Whitmore was congratulated by Mr. Laurence Housman, who was present at the last performance, on her beautiful production. The Oxted and Limpsfield Players have gained fresh laurels by their latest work.

NOTE.—Since the above was written the Players have sustained an irreparable loss by the tragic death of one of their youngest members, Colin Olssen. His was not only an attractive and delightful personality, but for a boy of nineteen he possessed a "sense of the stage" to an unusual degree, and was not only a keen actor, but a keen student of all things dramatic. He played many parts with the Oxted and Limpsfield Players, and was specially chosen by Mr. Housman to join the Glastonbury Players last month, where he won everyone's hearts by his enthusiasm for an art which he would have graced even more had his life been spared.

"Those whom the gods love die young."

G.L.

PANTON ARTS CLUB

The Panton Players (the Dramatic Section of the Panton Arts Club) gave their first performance at the Etlinger Theatre on Tuesday evening, July 20, when three fantasies by C. R. Allen were produced. In the first of these, "Will and the Witch," Miss Diana Harding gave an attractive interpretation of the witch, the other two parts being ably sustained by Miss Hilda Connel and Mr. Elvin Collins. The second fantasy was "The Four Foundlings," described by the "Observer" as "a remarkable little

work in which all of the characters have an allegorical significance." The mother was well played by Miss Audrey Cutcliffe, the inn-keeper and his wife by Mr. Frank Smith and Miss Hilda Connel. The third play was "When Mr. Punch was Young," in which a trio of clever children played the parts of the cripple Sparrow, Punch and Judy respectively. This play was successfully produced by Mr. Edmund Gordon, incidental music being supplied by the Wood-Smith Quartet, and some pupils of Maestro Morelli, while Miss Jill Argyll arranged the dances.

Performers for the plays given by the Club are chosen through the dramatic competitions of the half-yearly Festival of Arts and Letters. The Winter Festival for 1926 is now announced (closing date for entries November 30). The plays produced are the work of members of the Literary Section of the Club, preference being given to plays winning the medal of the Festival. The medal for play-writing in the Summer Festival was awarded to Miss Maud Cassidy and Miss Lily Brayton, the President of the Section acting as final adjudicator.

E. M. FRY.

THE PAINSWICK PLAYERS

The Painswick Players gave two performances of four selected scenes from the second part of "Henry IV" in the garden of Painswick House on July 22. The choice was a happy one, as these four scenes form a surprisingly complete dramatic whole.

The first two (Act I, Scene 2 and Act II, Scene 3) are laid in a London street, and the last two (Act III, Scene 2, and Act V, Scene 3) in Justice Shallow's garden in Gloucestershire.

The garden of Painswick House may be relied on to furnish a perfect setting, and Miss L. Hyett, the producer, had this year elected to place her characters against the background of a lofty yew hedge, behind which rose a wooded amphitheatre. It was a unique experience to sit in this beautiful Gloucestershire garden and see modern Gloucestershire villagers act the doings of their forbears, and to hear an English country audience roaring with laughter at English humour of Shakespeare's time. It brought one very near to Shakespeare. The acting was rapid and full of life, and the fooling delightfully spontaneous and unforced.

GUILDHOUSE FRANCISCAN FESTIVAL

To celebrate the seventh centenary of St. Francis of Assisi the Guildhouse has arranged an attractive programme which includes lectures by G. K. Chesterton, Rev. J. Adderley, Miss Margaret Bondfield, etc. One of the outstanding events will be the performance of three new "Little Plays" by Laurence Housman, and "Sister Gold" from the first collection. The title of the new plays to be performed for the first time at this Festival are "Brother Ass," "The Peacemakers," and "The Order of Release." The Guildhouse Players will present these plays on October 19, 20, and 21. Season tickets may be obtained, price 5s. each, to admit holder to any of the events during the Festival, which lasts for two weeks from October 3 to 24. Further particulars may be obtained from the Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W.1.

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